National Foreign Assessment Center

Secret

400-12-2
Copies 136

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Area Briefs

APPROVED FOR RELEASE
DATE: MAY 2004

78-139
8 Sept 78

Secret

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1. ORIGINAL AND YELLOW COPY TO CABLE SECRETARIAT. REMOVE SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS.
2. SET MARGIN FOR 69 CHARACTERS TO A LINE [illegible] DO NOT EXCEED [illegible] ION
3. MESSAGES ARE CONSIDERED ROUTINE UNLESS A HIGHER PRECEDENCE IS INDICATED IN THE ADDRESSEE LINE.

ALIGN FIRST LETTER IN THIS BOX → TYPE THE WORD "ALIGN" TO REGISTER HERE →

OUTGOING MESSAGE

ROUTING					
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PAGE 3 OF PAGES

SIGNAL CENTER USE ONLY

AGE	COI	ACP	TOR	TPE	MRD	DCI
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CLASSIFICATION: SECRET

MESSAGE NAME: TIME GROUP: CITE: MESSAGE REFERENCE NUMBER

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EAST ASIA BRIEF AP-EAB 78-139 FOR SEPTEMBER 8, 1978. 4

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1. ORIGINAL AND YELLOW COPY TO CABLE SECRETARIAT. REMOVE SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS.
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OUTGOING MESSAGE

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1. ORIGINAL AND YELLOW COPY TO CABLE SECRETARIAT. REMOVE SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS
2. SET MARGIN FOR 69 CHARACTERS TO A LINE. DING SPACES. DO NOT EXCEED ALIGN
3. MESSAGES ARE CONSIDERED ROUTINE UNLESS A HIGHER PRECEDENCE IS INDICATED IN THE ADDRESSEE LINE

ALIGN FIRST LETTER IN THIS BOX. TYPE THE WORD "ALIGN" TO REGISTER HERE

OUTGOING MESSAGE

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OUTGOING MESSAGE

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CLASSIFICATION: SECRET

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1. ORIGINAL AND YELLOW COPY TO CABLE SECRETARIAT. REMOVE SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS.
2. SET MARGIN FOR 69 CHARACTERS TO A LINE, INCLUDING SPACES. DO NOT EXCEED THIS [illegible] STATION.
3. MESSAGES ARE CONSIDERED ROUTINE UNLESS A HIGHER PRECEDENCE IS INDICATED IN THE ADDRESS LINE.

ALIGN FIRST LETTER IN THIS BOX. TYPE THE WORD "ALIGN" TO REGISTER HERE

OUTGOING MESSAGE

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2. SET MARGIN FOR 68 CHARACTERS TO A LINE. DOUBLE SPACING. DO NOT EXCEED [illegible] ATION.
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OUTGOING MESSAGE

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5. SOUTH KOREA: NUCLEAR WEAPONS DISCUSSION 4

RECENT PUBLIC DISCUSSION OF THE NUCLEAR WEAPONS OPTION IN SOUTH KOREA APPEARS PRIMARILY DESIGNED BY THE GOVERNMENT TO REASSURE THE PEOPLE THAT IT IS EXAMINING ALL MEANS OF STRENGTHENING THE COUNTRY.S DEFENSES FOLLOWING A US TROOP WITHDRAWAL. WE DO NOT BELIEVE IT REFLECTS NEW RESEARCH EFFORTS IN DIRECT SUPPORT OF DEVELOPING NUCLEAR WEAPONS.4

PUBLIC DISCUSSION OF THE NUCLEAR OPTION SINCE EARLY 1977 HAS BEEN TIED CLEARLY TO THE US TROOP WITHDRAWAL ISSUE. THE FIRST OFFICIAL REMARK OF ANY NOTE WAS MADE IN MAY 1977 WHEN KOREAN-US NEGOTIATIONS OPENED ON THE TERMS OF THE WWITHDRAWAL. THE GOVERNMENT HAS SINCE THEN BEEN TOLERANT OF NONOFFICIAL DEBATE ON THE ISSUE. IN FACT, THE EARLY OFFICIAL STATEMENTS WERE PROBABLY PERCEIVED BY

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THE PRESS AND THE ACADEMIC COMMUNITY TO SIGNAL THE END OF A TABOO THAT HAD EXISTED FOR SEVERAL YEARS ON OPEN TREATMENT OF THE NUCLEAR WEAPONS ISSUE.4

MOST SOUTH KOREANS VIEW THE US NUCLEAR UMBRELLA AS AN IMPORTANT DETERRENT TO WAR ON THE PENINSULA; THEY TEND TO ASSUME THAT THEIR OWN COUNTRY SHOULD DEVELOP NUCLEAR WEAPONS TO OFFSET ANY WEAKENING OF THE US SECURITY COMMITMENT.4

BY ALLOWING OR EVEN ENCOURAGING THE NUCLEAR WEAPONS DEBATE, THE GOVERNMENT MAY BELIEVE IT CAN CONVINCE THE PUBLIC THAT IT IS TAKING ALL NECESSARY PRECAUTIONS TO STRENGTHEN NATIONAL DEFENSES. THERE ARE NO DOUBT ALSO SOME MEMBERS OF THE KOREAN GOVERNMENT WHO BELIEVE THAT THE THREAT OF "GOING NUCLEAR" CAN BE USED AS A LEVER AGAINST THE US.4

FROM THE OUTSET, KOREAN OFFICIALS HAVE HOPED THAT THE CURRENT WITHDRAWAL PLAN WILL BE SCRAPPED OR SIGNIFICANTLY DELAYED, AND THEY MAY BE REASONING THAT NOW--WHEN THE PACE OF WITHDRAWAL HAS BEEN SLOWED--THE TIME IS RIGHT TO REMIND THE US OF THE POSSIBLE UNPLEASANT CONSEQUENCES OF REDUCED SUPPORT FOR THE SOUTH.4

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1. ORIGINAL AND YELLOW COPY TO CABLE SECRETARIAT. REMOVE SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS.
2. SET MARGIN FOR 65 CHARACTERS TO A LINE, INCLUDING SPACES. DO NOT EXCEED THIS LIMITATION.
3. MESSAGES ARE CONSIDERED ROUTINE UNLESS A HIGHER PRECEDENCE IS INDICATED IN THE ADDRESS.

ALIGN FIRST LETTER IN THIS BOX ← TYPE THE WORD "ALIGN" TO REGISTER HERE →

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THERE IS NO EVIDENCE THAT THE CURRENT PUBLIC DISCUSSION OF THE NUCLEAR OPTION REFLECTS A DEEPENING GOVERNMENT COMMITMENT TO ACQUIRE NUCLEAR WEAPONS; NOR ARE THERE SIGNS OF NEW RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY IN DIRECT SUPPORT OF SUCH A GOAL. WERE SEOUL TO REACTIVATE A CLANDESTINE RESEARCH PROGRAM, IT WOULD BE UNLIKELY TO TRY TO ADVERTISE THAT FACT. (SECRET

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